

Message Text

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21 11

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DRC-01 CU-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 /131 W

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R 240548Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8487

INFO CINCPAC

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18300

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: STURM UND DRANG IN THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER

REF: A. BANGKOK 17557

B. FBIS BANGKOK D190500Z/NOV 73

SUMMARY: INTERNAL DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) PRECIPITATED THE MASS RESIGNATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 18. A NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND A NEWLY CREATED "CENTRAL COMMITTEE," ARE SCHEDULED TO BE SELECTED DECEMBER 2. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT NEW COURSE THE ORGANIZATION MAY TAKE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NSCT HAS BEEN SUFFERING FROM A LEADERSHIP SPLIT OVER WHETHER ITS ACTIONS, OR LACK OF ACTION, DURING THE OCTOBER 14 EVENTS HAD DETRACTED FROM ITS CREDIBILITY AND WHETHER IT STILL RETAINED THE CONFIDENCE OF ITS CONSTITUENCY, THE STUDENTS (REF A). FOLLOWING
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AN EXTENDED DEBATE ON NOVEMBER 17-18, THE NSCT

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VOTED TO RESIGN AND ALLOW THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNIONS TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENTS WHO WOULD COMPRISE THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

2. NEARLY A WEEK LATER THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BANGKOK POST OF NOVEMBER 23 CARRIED AN ARTICLE SAYING THAT THE NSCT WOULD ESTABLISH A "CENTRAL COMMITTEE" WHOSE MEMBERS THE STUDENTS WOULD ALSO ELECT. THESE INDIVIDUALS WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, HAVE ANY RESPONSIBILITIES IN THEIR CONSTITUENT UNIVERSITIES, BUT WOULD BE PURELY NSCT FUNCTIONARIES. THIS MOVE APPARENTLY REFLECTS CRITICISM THAT THE NSCT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE SPREAD TOO THIN.

3. CRITICISM FROM BOTH THE HIGHLY ACTIVIST AND THE CONSERVATIVE ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM PRECIPITATED THE RESIGNATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. THE ACTIVISTS SPEARHEADED BY SEKSAN PRASERTKUL CLAIMED THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABANDONED THE STUDENT MOVEMENT DURING THE CRITICAL HOURS OF THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 13-14. FROM THE ACTIVIST VIEWPOINT, THIS CRITICISM IS NOT UNFOUNDED AS INDEED A NUMBER OF THE NSCT LEADERS WENT HOME AFTER THE RTG HAD AGREED TO THEIR DEMANDS LATE ON THE AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 13. AFTER THE VIOLENCE HAD BROKEN OUT OCTOBER 14, MANY OF THESE LEADERS WENT INTO HIDING FOR FEAR THAT ONCE THE DEMONSTRATION WAS PUT DOWN, THEIR LIVES WOULD BE IN DANGER. BESIDES THIS ALLEGED ABANDONMENT, THE ACTIVIST CRITICS RESENT THE OCTOBER 14 NSCT ANNOUNCEMENT URGING THE STUDENTS TO GO HOME AND CONDEMNING THE "RIOTERS", THAT IS, THOSE WHO WERE STILL ASSAULTING THE METROPOLIAN POLICE HEADQUARTERS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, NONE OF THE NSCT LEADERS EVER IMAGINED THAT THEY OR ANYBODY ELSE WOULD OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT.

4. SOME ELEMENTS HAVE ATTACKED THE NSCT LEADERSHIP FOR ITS CLOSE TIES WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT. CONSERVATIVES THINK THE STUDENTS SHOULD STICK TO CAMPUS/ STUDENT-WELFARE RELATED ISSUES. OTHER CRITICISMS
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ALLEGE POOR ACCOUNTING OF THE FUNDS DONATED TO THE NSCT.

5. THE FLACK FROM BOTH SIDES PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO NSCT SECRETARY GENERAL SOMBAT THAMRONGTHANYAWONGSE'S WITHDRAWAL ON NOVEMBER 5 INTO THE BUDDHIST MONKHOOD, FROM WHICH HE HAS NOT EMERGED.

6. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHO WILL EMERGE TO LEAD THE NSCT, AND HOW THE SHAKE-UP WILL AFFECT THE GOALS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE REMINTED ORGANIZATION. THE MAJORITY OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REMAIN MODERATE, AND MOST OF THOSE WHO ARE ACTIVIST ARE NOT RADICALLY INCLINED. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE CRITICISM FROM THE ACTIVIST SIDE HAS SOMEWHAT MORE BITE, AND IS SOMEWHAT MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF STUDENT OPINION AS A WHOLE, THAN THE CONSERVATIVE DISSENT. REGARDLESS OF WHICH INDIVIDUALS EMERGE FROM THE NEW ELECTIONS, THE NEW LEADERSHIP WILL THEREFORE PROBABLY TAKE A MORE ACTIVIST POSTURE THAN ITS PREDECESSORS. THIS TREND MAY BE ACCENTUATED BY THE CREATION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WHOSE MEMBERS WILL NOT BE BURDENED WITH THEIR HOME-CAMPUS RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES.
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